A BRIEF 6

TESTIMONY

AGAINST

TALE-BEARERS,

WHISPERERS,

AND

Back-biters.

SHEWING

That where they are given ear unto amongſt Friends, Neighbours, and Relations, or in any Chriſtian Society, ſuch can never live in Peace, Concord and Unity.

For their Words are as Wounds, they Reveal Secrets, they Separate near Friends: Therefore they are to be driven away with an Angry Countenance, Prov. 25. 23.

By *William Shewen.*

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A BRIEF TESTIMONY AGAINST Tale-bearers, Whiſperers, AND Back-biters.

I Have often conſidered the end and tendancy of Tale-bearing, Whiſpering, and Back-biting, and have obſerved the Evil Fruits and Effects thereof among Friends, Neighbours, and Relations. And have found and concluded, that it is impoſſible for any Society of

People upon the face of the Earth, that give countenance to any that are found in the practice thereof, to live or dwell together in Love, Unity, Peace, and heavenly Concord or Agreement, which indeed is the Glory, Strength and Crown of a People; and the contrary their Weakneſs, Shame and Reproach, Confuſion and Deſtruction alſo.

Therefore that they may be ſtopped, and their evil fruits and effects prevented, I have a concern upon my mind, as a Teſtimony and Caution not only againſt them, but alſo againſt ſuch as gives Tales, Whiſperings, and Backbitings, entertainment; that lends their ears unto them, that receives and believes them, and laies them up in their minds, where they increaſe and multiply againſt an evil Day.

For I ſay unto thee, whoſoever thou art, that deſireſt to keep clear of the evil effects that attends Tale-bearing; thou muſt not only forbear to tell Tales, but thou muſt alſo take heed

how

how thou heareſt, whom thou heareſt, and what thou heareſt. And if any come unto thee with a Story, Tale, or Relation, conſider the end and Tendency of what he ſaith unto thee; and if it be concerning a Perſon known unto thee, and what he ſaith tends to the Defamation or Diſrepute of the ſaid Perſon, and thou doſt not know of thy own Knowledge that the things he ſaith are true, thy Duty is to take great heed how thou heareſt him, or entertaineſt what he ſaith: But thou muſt ſay unto him, Friend, I know the Perſon of whom thou ſpeakeſt, and I do not know that thoſe things thou ſpeakeſt of him are true. Therefore as I would be done by in the like Caſe, let me know thy Name, Place of Abode, and Reputation; and I will at my firſt Opportunity acquaint the Perſon thou ſpeakeſt off, what thou ſay'ſt of him; and time and place ſhall be appointed, wherein I will hear you both together. And if thou art not willing it ſhould be ſo, what thou haſt

told me, I take no other notice of it but as a Tale of Evil Tendency, even to Wound, Estrange, and separate Friends; therefore I will drive thee away with an Angry Countenance, as a Back-biter, and Whisperer, whose words are as wounds, and whose arrows fly in Secret, to hurt the Innocent; so doing, this Tale-bearer will come no more at thee. If Thieves had no receivers they would not continue Stealing; so if Tale-tellers had no Tale-hearers and Receivers, they would and must leave off Tale-bearing: And according to an *English* Proverb, the Receiver is as bad as the Thief.

It is the Duty of every Friend, Brother, Neighbour, and Relation, and of every Member of a Religious Society, to be Tender and Careful of each others good Name, and Reputation; and Diligently to watch against that Creeping, Whispering, Back-biting Spirit, that sowes discord among Brethren, let it be judged in every appearance of it, so shall Love, Unity, and

good

good Neighbourhood be preſerved and encreaſed.

The Law of God by *Moſes* provided expreſly againſt Tale-bearing, *Thou ſhalt not go up and down as a Tale-bearer among thy People; neither ſhalt thou ſtand againſt the Blood of thy Neighbour*, Lev. 19. 16. Theſe two Evils are of a like Nature and Tendency. Again, *Thou ſhalt not raiſe a falſe Report, put not thy hand to the wicked to be an unrighteous Witneſs*, Exo. 23. 1. theſe two Evils are alſo akin to each other.

Tale-bearing and falſe reporting whoever is Guilty thereof with a deſign to Marr the Credit, good Name and Reputation of his Brother or Neighbour, is as he that puts his hand to the wicked, to be an unrighteous Witneſs; and as he that ſtands againſt the Blood of his Neighbour, *For his words are as Wounds, and they go down to the innermoſt part of the Belly. Prov.* 18. 8.

It is written in the Holy Scriptures, *Pſalm* 133. 1. *That it is a*

Comely

Comely and Pleasant thing, for Brethren to live (or dwell) *together in Unity*; it is like pretious Oyntment, as the Dew of *Hermon*, and as the Dew that Descended upon the Mountains of Sion.

What is to Compare more Excellent? What more Pleasant, Lovely, and Amiable, then to behold a People dwell together in Unity, in Love, and Brotherly kindness. In this Heavenly Society, no Tale-bearer hath any place, they are Witnesses of the Truth of that saying, *Prov.* 26. 20. *Where there is no Tale-bearer, strife ceaseth.*

It is not possible for Neighbours, Friends, and Relations, nor for any Society of People to live together in Unity, Friendship and good Neighbourhood, while there goeth up and down a Tale-bearer among them; a Whisperer and Back-biter among them, they are numbred by St. *Paul* in his Epistle to the *Romans*, *Rom.* 1. 29, 30. with the worst of Sinners; and the Testimony of *Solomon* is, That the false

false Witness that speaketh Lies, and him that soweth discord among Brethren is one of the Six things which God hates, and is an Abomination to him, *Prov.* 6. 19. for indeed they are Authors of much Mischief, and are Inconsistant with Peace, Concord, and Society.

And where these sort of Evil doers are entertained their words makes wounds not easily cur'd; makes Breaches not soon made up and repaired, Seperate's and Divides near Friends, so that they are not easily Reconciled again.

But where the Tale-bearer, Whisperer, and Backbiter, is shut out, brought to Trial, Judged, or driven away with an Angry Countenance, all his designs are defeated, Love, Peace, and Concord is maintained a Living together in Love and Unity preserved; which indeed is a great Happiness, a great Comfort, a great Blessing for Friends, Neighbours, and Relations to Enjoy.

Where envy and ſtrife is, there is Confuſion and every evil Work; a froward Man ſoweth Strife, and a Whiſperer ſeparateth chief Friends; but where Love and Unity is, there is good order and every good work. And the ſeed of the froward Man cannot take root in ſuch, nor the work of the Whiſperer take effect, eſpecially among ſuch who keep in that love and unity by which they are known to be Diſciples of Jeſus.

And thoſe two Excellent precepts of Chriſt are by thoſe who are his Diſciples indeed truly obſerved, in order to keep Love and Unity, and prevent the Contrary, and the occaſion thereof.

Firſt, If thy Brother offend or treſpaſs againſt thee, go to him and tell him of his fault, between him and thee; if he will hear thee, thou haſt gained thy Brother, if he will not, take one or two more with thee, if he will not hear them, then tell the Church or Congregation; if he will not

hear

hear the Congregation, let him be as an Heathen or Publican.

Secondly, VVhatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, do ſo unto them likewiſe.

The true Obſervation of theſe two Precepts cuts off all VVhiſperings, evil Speakings, Back-bitings, Tale-bearings, and the uncovering the nakedneſs and weakneſs of any Friend, Brother, and Neighbour, before he hath performed his Duty, as is ſet forth in the firſt Precept, which indeed tends to the preſervation of Love and Unity among Brethren, and the contrary tends to Strife, Diviſion, and Deſtruction.

No better Method can be laid down in a Chriſtian Society to prevent a Breach, and to maintain Love and Brotherly kindneſs, than what is contained in this Precept, the neglect and Non-obſervance of this by many Perſons and Societies profeſſing Chriſtianity, hath let in Animoſities, Strifes, Debates, Diviſion, Diſorders, and Confuſion among them, ſo that they have

have been ſcattered as with a VVhirl-wind, and have received the fruit of their own doings in their own boſoms, as might be demonſtrated at large, throughout moſt of the Sects and gatherings of People in Chriſtendom, who only talk of and profeſs good words, and good things; but the *Jews*, *Turks*, and *Indians* may compare with them for good VVorks, yea, they have cauſed the name of God and the Chriſtian Religion to be blaſphemed, ſcorned and ſlighted amongſt them; even becauſe while they are talking of God, Chriſt, Love, Light, Holineſs, Righteouſneſs, and Religion, they are envying, hating, biting and devouring one another, and ſheathing their Swords in one anothers Bowels, having turned that Royal Law, *Do as you would be done by*, behind their backs, whereas indeed the obeying theſe ſeven words is more than the Reading, Hearing and Profeſſing ſeven times ſeven thouſand words.

There

There is no Society of People upon the face of the Earth, though under the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity it ſelf, that have, can, do, or ever ſhall live together in Love and Unity as true Friends and Brethren, further then they Obey and Obſerve theſe two divine and Heavenly Precepts. And as they *do*, *have*, or *ſhall* degenerate from the true Obſervance thereof, they *do*, *have*, and *ſhall* fall into Strife, Enmity, and Diviſion the High-way to Deſtruction. And many have been Deſtroyed thereby, even after they have attained to a good Degree in the Spirit of Love, Simplicity and Heavenly Unity, and all through Diſobedience, or neglect of thoſe Precepts of Chriſt, which he once taught, and now Teacheth thoſe who are his Diſciples indeed to Obſerve and keep by the Aſiſtance of his holy Spirit of Love which is the Bond of Peace, and true Foundation of all Heavenly Concord and Agreement.

And this Spirit teacheth all that have it, and obey it, to be Circumſpect and take heed of Letting in evil Thoughts, evil Reports, Whiſperings, and evil Surmiſes againſt any Friend, Brother, or Neighbour, for it will eat like a Canker; and if thy Brother, Friend, or Neighbour, hath Treſpaſſed againſt thee, thou muſt not tell it firſt to others, if thou doeſt, thou art in ſome degree a Tale-bearer, and a Back-biter, and Tranſgreſſer of this Command of Chriſt, which reacheth all manner of Treſpaſſes and Offences that are private, and relating to a particular Perſon, offended or treſpaſſed againſt; which the Church or Congregation knows not of, nor ought not, except thy Brother refuſe to hear thee.

But if any that is called a Brother, Sin openly, or is a Fornicator, is a profane Perſon, is an Idolator, Drunkard, or Extortioner, &c. thou needs not go to ſuch a one and tell him his Fault, betwixt thee and him, nor to take others with thee, nor to tell the Congregation

gregation this Precept doth not concern him, his Treſpaſs is not only againſt thee, but againſt all he pretened to be in Fellowſhip with, his wickedneſs being open and Manifeſt to all; he is to be denied, and judged of all, and it is no Back-biting to ſpeak the Truth of ſuch a Man to others concerned, though behind his back.

Every Member of a true Society who are gathered by the Spirit of Truth, and lives in the Fellowſhip of it, they are furniſhed with Courage and ſtrength to defend each other, to Believe well, and Hope well, of each other againſt all evil Reports, Tales and Storys that may be raiſed, and will let nothing in, but upon good Proof, or clear Manifeſtation; and then tho it may bring Sorrow, yet a Judgment is raiſed with Severity againſt the doing of Evil by ſuch who are under the Profeſſion of good; ſuch Hypocrites God will Judge to the uttermoſt, their Damnation ſlumbers not, yet ſuch there have been, are, and will be, un-

der the highest Professions outward that ever were, are, or shall be among men, (until the Universal destruction of that grand Enemy of mankind.)

It is an excellent degree in Christianity to attain to that state in Love which thinks no ill, such can speak no ill, nor do no ill against their Friend or Neighbour, nor against any man; the Tale-carrier, Whisperer, nor Flatteter, can have no place with such a one, his very Countenance drives them away, having no part in him, can give no entertainment to them.

He that seeth a Thief and consenteth to him is Guilty with him: Tale-bearers, Whisperers, and Back-biters, and their entertainers, who defame and Rob a man of his good Name, Credit and Reputation, are greater Thieves than those that Rob a man of a little Money and Goods; as it is written, *A good Name is better than precious Ointment*, Eccles. 7. 3. *A good Name is rather to be chosen than great Riches*, Prov. 22. 1. He that raiseth a false

Report,

Report and gets Tale-carriers to carry it abroad; and these Tell-tales finds entertainers and receivers; Who knows the extent of such things? And who can measure the evil fruit of such doings? Such evil Seed meeting with ground suitable thereunto, grows and increaseth amain, and according to the Phrase a man's Back is bitten, his Credit wounded, his good Name stained and defiled, his Reputation impaired, if not destroyed among such as are credulous of false Reports; and all this is done as it were insensibly, sometimes before he knows any thing thereof.

It hath not been without great cause that both God and men hath given forth Laws against such things. He that professeth and obeyeth that Royal Law or Precept of Christ, *Do as thou wouldst be done unto*, cannot touch with these things, nor shew any favour or countenance to any that are found therein.

I shall now Answer one Question, and conclude this my Caution, Warning, and Testimony against raysing false Re-

ports, Tale-bearing, and Tale-hearing, having an aim for general Good therein, hoping what I have ſaid may be of ſome ſervice for the ſtopping and preventing of ſuch things which tend to the dividing and deſtroying all true Friendſhip and Soeiety.

The Queſtion is this; If a Falſe Report be raiſed and ſpread abroad, received and entertained as a Truth, being told ſo, and received ſo (as all falſe Reports and Tales are under the name of Truth, which makes them the more miſchievous) what courſe is beſt to be taken in ſuch a caſe, that I may do all the right I can to the perſon concerned.

Anſwer, When the Report comes to thy ear, engage the perſon that brings it, to bring forth his Author; and ſo let it be enquired and purſued until the firſt Author be found, and then let ſound Judgment paſs thereon; and this will be a means to ſtop and diſcourage Tale-bearers, Back-biters, and Whiſperers. And by ſo doing ſuch will no

not again attempt to bring thee any more Tales. Alſo in ſo doing thou wilt do as thou wouldſt be done by, according to the Law of God: if thou doſt otherwiſe, the Law of God and Man is againſt thee, and thou art not fit to be a Member of a Chriſtian Society.

The Concluſion.

Now it being a Truth that Tale-bearing, Whiſpering, raiſing evil Reports, and receiving and entertaining of them; and the neglect of obſerving thoſe two Precepts of Chriſt before mentioned, are of ſuch pernicious effects and evil tendency, as to reveal *Secrets*, ſeparate near Friends, beget *Strife* and *Diviſion*, deſtroy *Society* and *Friendſhip*, make *Wounds* and *Breaches*, and as an *Unrighteous Witneſs* that puts forth his *Hand* againſt the *Blood* of his *Neighbour*, and worſe than *Thieves* and *Robbers*, I ſay, ſeeing it is ſo, it highly concerns all that would be accounted vertuous and honeſt, to keep clear of theſe

ports, Tale-bearing, and Tale-hearing, having an aim for general Good therein, hoping what I have ſaid may be of ſome ſervice for the ſtopping and preventing of ſuch things which tend to the dividing and deſtroying all true Friendſhip and Soeiety.

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things; and to judge it in the leaſt appearance thereof, not only in others but in themſelves.

POSTSCRIPT.

THere were Young People in the Primitive times that grew idle and wanton (eſpecially young Women) as went from Houſe to Houſe, and were Tatlers and buſie bodies, and medlers with other mens matters, and ſpeaking things which they ought not; alſo they were prone to delight themſelves in coſtly Apparel, and platting the Hair, and wearing of Gold, *&c.* all theſe things the Apoſtles and Miniſters of Chriſt were troubled to ſee and hear of them, and did exhort and endeavour to perſwade to the contrary; becauſe it did not become Women profeſſing Godlineſs; and where theſe things are found now in, with, and upon People, Young or Old, Male or Female, let them profeſs what they

they will) they are infallible ſigns that they want the inward adorning of a meek and quiet Spirit, that they are not like the King's Daughter, *That is all glorious within*; and that the loins of their minds are not girded with the Girdle of Truth, when the loins of their Bodies are girded with rich and coſtly Attire, and ſuperfluous vanities; and that the very Profeſſion and Religion of ſuch is vain, who have not a bridle to their Tongues, and are not reſtrained thereby from Tatling, medling and ſpeaking thoſe things they ought not.

Now that all young people that profeſs the Truth may be kept and preſerved out of theſe evils; take the Counſel of *Paul* to *Timothy*, *Flee all youthful Luſts: follow Righteouſneſs, Faith, Charity, Peace, with them that call upon the Lord with a pure heart*; if you do but obey this Exhortation (by the aſſiſtance of the grace of God, to which you have been commended to be taught all good Leſſons) you can

never fall into the aforementioned evils, nor any other, for when you come into each others company, your words will be few, and ſeaſoned with Grace, and the *Fear and dread of God will be with you*, and you will ſet him alwaies before you, then will your diſcourſe tend to the edifying each other, then inſtead of meddling with other mens matters, or telling one another Stories you will tell one another what the Lord hath done for your Souls, from the experimental work of his Spirit and Grace in your hearts, according to the Manifeſtation and Working thereof. And you will take heed of boaſting above what you have attained there through, and of ſpeaking of thoſe things which Chriſt hath not wrought in you; ſo will you alſo be preſerved from High-mindedneſs and Conceitedneſs, which would lead to Pride your ſelves with Knowledge, *Openings*, *Viſions*, and *Revelations* which ſome of you may have had; that you may not deck your ſelves with theſe things, which

which are all Good, Pleaſant, and Delightful in their Time and Seaſon: Yet they are not for Food, nor Raiment, all muſt receive their daily Bread from God; and their Clothing, or Covering, muſt be his Spirit, (or a Meek and quiet Spirit) where this is wanting, the wo from God will come, let the talk and Profeſſion of Religion be what it will.

The Eye, Mind, and Heart muſt be upon God, from whence every good and perfect gift comes; and not upon the gift, leaſt you deck your ſelves there with and play the Harlot; as ſome in former Ages has done. And in this Age alſo, and brought Judgment upon themſelves to the utmoſt; even after they have been made comely with his Ornaments, with his Gifts and Graces, Eat and Drank at his Table, enjoyed his preſence, and heard him Teach in their ſtreets; yea, and caſt out many Devils in his Name: Yet have become ſhut out of his Kingdom, and have wholly loſt the way that leadeth there to. Again. This

This hath befaln many (especially young People) in my own knowledge and remembrance, since God gathered us to be a People; for want of watchfulness and keeping low in the fear of God; some hath fallen by flying aloft in airy Imaginations and Notions, being puffed up in their minds; and some by returning again and going down into the Earth, like the Sow that was washed to the wallowing in the Mire again.

Now that you and all may be preserved herefrom, and from all Evil, from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, I commend you in the first place to the Grace, Light and Spirit of God, which hath appeared to you and shined in you; and in the next place in the sence thereof to read *Pauls* Directions to *Titus* 2. and 3. Chap. *Meditate and consider thereof and you may Receive profit thereby.*

The Children of friends whose Parents hath taken care to instruct, councel, and perswade them not onely by Precept, but by Exam-

ple

ple in life and Converſation to follow their ſteps, and to walk after them in the Self-denial, out of the pomp and vanities of the World, out of the ſinful luſts of the fleſh, luſts of the eye, and pride of life, which ſuperabounds in the world; theſe Children have had great benefit and advantage beyond what their Parents ever had; and many Children, Sons and Daughters have made a good uſe thereof, and can bleſs and praiſe God that they had ſuch Parents. And theſe are come to the ſence, knowledge and underſtanding of the root of the matter in themſelves, *viz.* the Light and Grace of God within, the New Covenant and Law written within, and do walk therein, and are taught thereby, to the praiſe and glory thereof.

But many Friends Children keep only in the form, in the outward Court, and enters not within the vail, comes not to the foundation which God hath laid, do not know the work and operation of the Grace and Spirit of God upon

upon their hearts, minds and understandings, to wash, cleanse, and Sanctifie their inward parts; so knows not what it is to put off the Old man with his Deeds, and to put on the New, and to be renewed in the Spirit of their minds, these grow not in Grace, nor in the knowledge of the mysteries of God; neither are they acquainted with the wiles and devices of the Enemy, Education and Tradition being the chief ground of their Religion; these will wither like Corn upon the house top.

There is another sort of Friends Children, who after they have come to years and stature, have slighted and turned their backs upon their Parents, and upon all their Counsel, Instruction, Perswasion, and Example. Also as to Religion, and have chosen their own waies, walking after their own corrupt wills, casting off the Yoke of Modesty, Temperance, Chastity, plainness of Speech, and plainness of Apparel which they had been bred up in while young with their Parents, and are gone into the

the ſuperfluity of naughtineſs that is in the world (to their own ruin) in contempt, diſobedience and diſhonour of their Parents, which hath cauſed Grief, and made their hearts ſad; and by ſo doing, their hearts have become hard, unthankful, and unholy; and without natural affection alſo towards their Parents, contemning, diſregarding and diſobeying the Commandments of God: And all the Precepts and Exhortations, Bleſſings and Curſings promiſed and threatned to the obedient and diſobedient Children to Parents, which are very many throughout the holy Scriptures; and all the bonds of Nature that enjoyns Children to Love, Honor, and Obey their Parents: ſuch Children are nigh unto Curſing, nigh unto a reprobate ſence, out of which it will be a Miracle if ever they return, Repent and be Converted.

It is a bleſſed thing when young People and Children *Remember their Creator in the daies of their Youth*; and come to live in the fear of the Lord, and

and to have ſuch Parents, Maſters and Tutors as are ready to Teach them, Inſtruct them, and put them in mind thereof, not only by Precept but by Example alſo; which Bleſſings, if they ſlight, neglect and undervalue in their youthful daies, their ſins multiply upon them; Ignorance, Darkneſs, and hardneſs of Heart encreaſeth in them to that degree, that many times they become old in wickedneſs in their young daies; ſuch if they periſh, God and their Parents are clear, and their Deſtruction is of themſelves, becauſe they have deſpiſed the bleſſings of God, and the bleſſings of their Parents, who have had a tender care of them; but when God makes them poſſeſs the ſins of their Youth, then will they cry out, Oh, that we had born the Yoke in our Youth: Oh, that we had hearkened to the Voice of God in our own Conſciences, and to the Voice of our Parents: then ſhould we not have Reaped ſuch an evil Crop of our own Sowing; And

they

they ſhall then be made to confeſs tha God is Juſt, and Righteous in all hi Judgments, when they Receive the Fruit of their own doings, and feel the Weight of their own Iniquity.

William Shewen.

THE END.